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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage October 12 on President Chen Shui-bian's decision to resume the chairmanship of the DPP Thursday, on Taiwan's UN referendum and the 2008 presidential election, and on Doris Lessing, winner of the 2007 Nobel Prize in literature. The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" ran an exclusive news story on page six with the headline "Taiwan Assures the United States That It Will Not Use Hsiung Feng-IIE [Missiles] to Provoke [China]." Among the editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" discussed the U.S.-China-Taiwan relations. The article said the United States' "economic recklessness and blind consumption has given China the upper hand in bilateral relations" and concluded that it is "better to be a little tiger with sharp teeth than a snack for a giant dragon." End summary.

"Better a Little Tiger with Sharp Teeth"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (10/12):

"... The US and the rest of the international community have rightly expressed their disgust and condemned the junta in Myanmar following its brutal crackdown on peaceful pro-democracy activists. But, apart from the odd slap on the wrist and an annual report here and there, the same powerful countries stay strangely silent on China's human rights abuses, even though scenarios similar to those in Myanmar occur on an almost daily basis. Human rights don't count in China when there are economic interests at stake, it appears. The mantra-like calls that were emanating from Washington not so long ago for China to revalue its currency have decreased since a number of important Chinese academics made public threats in the international media about China cashing in its bonds and destabilizing the US economy.

"Meanwhile, a reluctance to upset Beijing has also led the US to look disingenuous when it talks about supporting democracy. On the one hand members of the US administration traverse the globe touting Taiwan's democratic achievements and the US' belief in and support for emerging democracies, but on the other the US tells Taiwan it can't hold a referendum, for doing so may upset its giant undemocratic neighbor and make life difficult for the White House. These are just the most recent examples of how the US' economic recklessness and blind consumption has given China the upper hand in bilateral relations. And the dream that economic development would lead to political change in China has proved to be no more than that. ...

"If close economic ties can reduce the US to the role of a submissive customer, then what chance does Taiwan have? Better to be a little tiger with sharp teeth than a snack for a giant dragon."

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